

## THE LEVESON INQUIRY

### STATEMENT OF REBEKAH MARY BROOKS

#### Introduction

1. I am Rebekah Mary Brooks, and I make this statement in response to a request from the Leveson Inquiry.
2. Since leaving News International, I have not had access to company records or to News International's substantial archive. In providing this statement I have therefore had to rely mostly on my memory, although I have checked such matters as I can with the help of my PA's desk diaries, the Internet, some newspaper online archives and such personal and journalistic material of my own as has not been retained by the Metropolitan Police. In the light of this, and the fact that I am under investigation, I hope the Inquiry will understand the difficulties incurred in compiling this statement.
3. That said, I am glad to assist, and I have done my best to answer every question fully. I hope that my evidence will help the Inquiry as it inquires into the relationship between politicians and the national press.
4. I have been asked to deal with the approach that I have taken to engaging with senior politicians, political advisers, civil servants and senior police officers, together with my views on the influence of the media on public policy and decision-making, including media policy. The Inquiry has also asked me to address a number of points of detail, but I would like to begin by making some general observations.
5. The Inquiry has repeatedly heard that an independent, free press is an essential element of our democracy. I have worked in newspapers for 22 years, much of that time at a senior level, and I believe this to be true.
6. I have seen at first hand the importance of the press as a means of holding politicians and other public figures to account and of influencing policies for the public good. Elections in the country occur only every few years, and referendums are rare. Outside elections, accountability of our national politicians is often only achieved through the media, in particular the newspapers, reporting, questioning and challenging politicians over what they say and do. The same can be said for other public figures.
7. I believe that all newspapers robustly stand up for the interests of their readers, and that they never compromise their positions for the sake of maintaining

relationships with politicians or other public figures, whether for personal, commercial or any other reasons. A newspaper's responsibility to its readers is paramount.

8. Regular contact between the press and politicians, public officials and senior police officers is of vast importance to our democracy. Newspapers and politicians each need contact with the other to do their jobs well, and they cannot have a relationship at a great distance. It is only when journalists and politicians get to know each other that they can properly understand each other's perspective. Journalists need to get to know politicians to understand the inner workings of parliament and Whitehall and of course their policies in order to explain and communicate those policies to their readers. However they also need to get to know the politicians themselves so that they can form a view on their principles and characteristics. Politicians of course welcome this.
9. It is up to individuals to make sure that this contact is appropriate and that their relationships adhere to their own professional codes of conduct. But the fact that such contact exists is not itself a cause for concern. Some commentators appear to suggest that regular contact between the press and politicians in private should not take place. Such a view would be entirely wrong.
10. This brings me on to the related issue on the importance of newspaper readers. The influence of the press is a direct result of its relationship with its readers. If a newspaper manages to echo its readers' outlook, and at important moments to catch their mood, then its ability to persuade, as well as inform and entertain, can be significant. This is why sometimes newspaper campaigns can be so effective. Conversely, if a newspaper fails to carry its readers with it, it will quickly know, and will try to adapt accordingly. A newspaper can only be successful if its tone, content and editorial stance reflects the views of its readership, not just one editor or one proprietor.
11. We are fortunate in the United Kingdom that we have a number of national newspapers, which are distinctively different from each other. No newspaper can survive unless it offers content and outlook to its readership which differs from its competitors. There are no obvious gaps. It is broadly true to say that national newspapers collectively cater for the needs of the population.
12. My experience of working on a daily newspaper was with *The Sun*. There is no typical Sun reader – it is a very broad church. In many ways, *The Sun* readership embodies an attitude rather than a particular social class. Its values are those of hard working people, with a strong sense of right or wrong. It is sometimes said that the relationship between *The Sun* and its readers reflects the national conversation - if you wanted to know what the nation was talking about, you would look at *The Sun*.
13. *The Sun* had an interactive newsroom with its readership. We achieved this in a variety of ways. We had an e-mail and text system whereby readers could contact the paper, as well as post their opinions on *MySun*. We conducted MORI Polls of our readers and we even had our own reader panel to

understand their concerns. Every year we organised for millions of readers to go on bargain holidays. I would go on an annual caravan park holiday with Sun readers and with my senior executives to hear their views on a variety of subjects. We also heard their concerns through their telephone calls, emails and letters. It was considered a sackable offence for any member of staff to be disrespectful to a reader's point of view. This was a two-way relationship and we would bring issues to the readers' attention through the projection of news stories, editorials and campaigns.

14. *The Sun* would often take up the plights of its readers through these channels. These included readers who had been the victims of crime, and it was certainly the aim to fight for any injustice that our readers had suffered. But the main point was to give the readers a voice and get them a hearing, through us, with the individual politicians who could help them.
15. I make these points because a myth has developed that newspaper editors, or proprietors, are an unelected force, shaping and changing Government policy to suit their own interests. That is just not so. A newspaper only has influence to the extent that it has accurately judged its readers' mood. In turn, readers choose to vote for their paper every day in their purchase decision. With *The Sun*, the readers know what they're getting and what the paper stands for.

#### My career history/job description

16. I joined News International in 1989 at the age of 20, after beginning my career at Eddie Shah's Messenger Newspaper Group. I worked firstly on the *News of the World* Sunday magazine, before joining the *News of the World* newspaper in 1993 as a features writer.
17. In 1994 I became Features Editor. In 1995, although continuing to look after features, I became 'Senior Associate Editor' of the *News of the World* and, shortly afterwards, Deputy Editor. The Deputy Editor was responsible for editing when the Editor (at that time Phil Hall) was on holiday, and so, in 1996, at the age of 27, I edited my first edition of the *News of the World*.
18. In 1998 I was appointed as Deputy Editor of *The Sun*. I remained there for two years before returning to the *News of the World* in 2000 as Editor. Les Hinton was the Executive Chairman throughout my time there as Editor.
19. At the beginning of January 2003, I became Editor of *The Sun* where I remained until I became CEO of News International in September 2009. I resigned my position and, with great sadness, ended my 22-year career at News International on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011.
20. I have been asked about the processes by which I was appointed to these various positions, the relevant specifications, remit and job descriptions, and about my relationship with Rupert Murdoch in the conduct of these appointments.
21. My early appointments were in the gift of the various editors under whom I worked. However, my promotion to Deputy Editor of the *News of the World*

- in 1995 was, I understand, the result of consultation between Les Hinton (the CEO and Executive Chairman of News International) and my then editor.
22. The same process applied for my appointment as Deputy Editor of *The Sun* in 1998, and it was Les Hinton who, again, offered me the role of Editor of the *News of the World* in 2000. I believe, however, that this would have been discussed with Rupert Murdoch.
  23. Although I met Rupert Murdoch on a few occasions when I was Features Editor of the *News of the World*, I only had direct contact with him when I became Deputy Editor in 1995. Rupert Murdoch would sometimes ring the newspaper on a Saturday evening and either the editor or I would take the call.
  24. As Deputy Editor of *The Sun*, I continued to have contact with Rupert Murdoch, especially when the Editor was away. When I returned to the *News of the World* as Editor in 2000, I would generally be in contact with him weekly. However, I continued to have daily contact with Les Hinton.
  25. I believe that Rupert Murdoch was more involved and instrumental in the process for my appointment as Editor of *The Sun* in 2003. Thereafter we were in regular contact, although I still continued to report to Les Hinton on a daily basis.
  26. In 2009 I discussed becoming CEO of News International, firstly with James Murdoch and then latterly with Rupert Murdoch. This was announced in June 2009 and I became CEO of News International in September. I reported directly to James Murdoch for the remainder of my career with News International. Throughout my senior career at News International I had a close working relationship and regular contact with Les Hinton, Rupert Murdoch and James Murdoch as well as other senior News Corp executives.
  27. As for describing my jobs, their remit and relevant specifications, I will try to be succinct. My career in newspapers until the appointment to Deputy Editor level was always on the features side of the newsroom. This involved both writing and commissioning of features - interviews, buy ups, book serializations, responsibility for the columnists, generating agenda-setting stories and investigations, as well as conceiving ideas for campaigns covering a variety of both serious and light hearted issues. Thereafter, I was a national newspaper editor for a decade in both the daily and Sunday markets, although they are completely different disciplines.
  28. By contrast, as CEO of News International, I was responsible for the commercial success of the company. Although all the editors and their senior executives reported to me, my main responsibilities concerned the financial health of the newspapers rather than their editorial direction. From the outset, a significant and ever increasing proportion of my time as CEO was spent dealing with the phone hacking claims and investigation.
  29. The common factors in all these positions were long hours and short holidays. There was no work/lifestyle balance: work *was* the lifestyle, as is the case with most newspaper journalists.



## Relationships with public figures

### *General*

30. I have submitted to the Inquiry (RMB/1) a list of meetings with senior politicians (including political advisers and press officers) and senior representatives of the police service. The list is, however, based upon such limited documentation as I still have, primarily a diary kept by my former PA, which goes up to May 2011, supplemented by my memory. I am fully aware that the list may therefore be incomplete (particularly in comparison with the schedules submitted to the Inquiry by others) or inaccurate.
31. Since my departure from News International I have had no access to my work emails. However, the emails and texts that were on my Blackberry at the time I left News International were imaged and saved. These cover a limited period from the beginning of June 2011 until 17<sup>th</sup> July 2011. I have not been able to view all the emails for that period since a number were compressed and it was not possible to retrieve them. There is one email which might be relevant to the inquiry, which I attach as RMB/2. Apart from this, there is nothing in the emails that I have been able to view which is relevant to the Inquiry. As regards my emails to my private accounts, there are none there which are relevant.
32. I have not included in RMB/1 references to attending party conferences, drinks receptions or awards ceremonies unless there is a reference to meeting with a specific individual. I often attended events where I would have spoken to many public figures about a variety of issues and I have not attempted to document these events. Also, in some instances I simply cannot now recall the extent to which, if at all, political topics were raised in the course of social events. It is not possible from my records to say who initiated the various meetings that I have listed or, sometimes, what the purpose or content of the meetings might have been. I have not recorded whether special advisers were present at any of the meetings with politicians, but it is likely that they will have been present during some of the meetings.

### *Police*

33. I first met representatives of the police service when I became a senior newspaper executive. As a features writer I did not cover the crime beat nor did that function report to me as a features editor. I have met with the last four MPS commissioners: Lord Condon, Lord Stevens and Lord Blair, and Sir Paul Stephenson - some of them on several occasions. I have also met with other senior MPS figures. However, a lot of my contact with police officers stems from The Sun's fifteen-year sponsorship and support of The Police Bravery awards. At these events, I have met with many chief constables and police officers from the regions.

### *Civil servants and press officers*

34. I have met a few civil servants, perhaps just the most senior of the day. The same goes for political press officers unless they accompanied a politician at a

meeting. My contacts on political issues were almost always with the politicians themselves although often SPAD's would be there. This probably stems from the fact that I only really became involved in political journalism when I had executive roles.

35. For as long as I have worked in the newspaper industry, I have observed, and then also been part of, the symbiotic relationship between the press and politicians. It is in politicians' interests to try and influence the electorate through the readership of the press, and it is in our interest to inform our readers of what is really going on in the corridors of Westminster. One defining aspect of journalism is the ability to tell many people what few people know. Full contact with senior public officials is a vital aspect of a newspaper's responsibility to its readers.
36. I don't know any journalist that doesn't want to meet a senior politician, or those that advise them, in the simple pursuit of what we do – the gathering, analysis and distribution of information.
37. Equally, I don't know any politician who doesn't want to meet a journalist or senior newspaper executive in the pursuit of what they do – the gathering of support for themselves and/or their policies. A lot of politicians wanted reader feedback and reaction to their policies or proposed policies. For instance, we were able to lobby a Chancellor of the Exchequer that a proposed change in policy, which would affect cheap flights, would be seen as a tax on the less fortunate – including many of our readers and the policy was withdrawn.
38. There is a common denominator, however, in both parts of this symbiotic relationship. It is that we are all accountable to the same constituents – the readers and the voters are one and the same.
39. The relationship inevitably produces tensions, but I believe that, for the most part, the tension works for the public good as it produces effective communication between the press and the political establishment shaping our readers' lives which, in turn, assists in the democratic process.
40. Over time, close association between politicians and journalists does produce a build-up of trust and confidence between them and, in some cases, friendship as well. When your area of work brings you close to others, it is inevitable that this will sometimes develop into friendship and it is not possible to legislate or regulate against this, nor is it desirable to do so. There can be nothing wrong with the fact that friendships are made from time to time, provided that professional duties are not undermined.
41. It is important to understand, however, that close and effective working relationships must not lead to compromise on either side. I have never abused my friendships to gain access to information that otherwise I could not have obtained as a professional journalist, nor have I ever compromised my independence through loyalty to a friend who is also a politician.
42. But whether a relationship develops into friendship or not, a relationship of trust and confidence between the press and politicians does have great value.

Where I have known a politician well, this has led on many occasions to a free and frank exchange of views as we have sought to change policy or better understand why the Government is taking a particular stance. If our relationship were always confrontational and antagonistic, we simply would not engage with politicians to that degree. Equally, an amicable relationship often helps, particularly in decisions in publishing stories of a personal nature.

43. In my various roles as a journalist and newspaper executive, I have met many politicians from every party, as well as those that advise them. I have met them on numerous occasions, and with varying degrees of regularity. At some point or other I must have met with every leading politician. This was to be expected, is no different to any newspaper editor and it has been this way for decades.
44. I got to know some politicians very well. I think I met first Tony Blair in 1995. The meetings at that time were all about getting to know him and his beliefs since it was fairly clear that New Labour would be elected. Over the succeeding years we met often, particularly during my time as Editor of *The Sun*.
45. I do not believe it is true that I was closer to politicians than other newspaper editors. I also made sure I met politicians from all parties. Similarly, I have generally felt that politicians were fairly even-handed in terms of the time they spent with journalists. For instance I do not know one Home Secretary who wasn't familiar with every Editor on Fleet Street. But of course the readership of some newspapers is more in sympathy with some political parties than others.
46. There are many examples I could use to demonstrate that the ability to obtain access to politicians has worked to the public good, for instance, the funding of Childline. The NSPCC contacted me to say that the Government were proposing to cut Childline's funding. *The Sun* was a great supporter of Childline and it was also relevant to Sarah's Law since that concerned targeted abuse in the home as well as paedophiles living in the community. To me, the fact that as a result of Government cuts an abused child's calls might go unanswered was unthinkable and I knew *The Sun* readers would be outraged by this when there was so much of tax payers money wasted on bureaucracy that helped no one. I therefore sought meetings both with Gordon Brown and Tony Blair to try to persuade them to guarantee Childline's funding for the next few years, and *The Sun* campaigned on the issue as well. After initial resistance, they eventually agreed.
47. Another example relates to the now well-known disagreements between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Without close access to them, and those around them, the press would never have been able to discover, analyse and report on the political consequences of their growing rift.
48. There were many different kinds of meetings. In general, there wasn't a formal process to arranging meetings. Most often they were held at News International Headquarters in Wapping, but sometimes I would travel to Downing Street (or Chequers), the relevant ministry or wherever the politician

(whether government or opposition) was located for meetings. The Party conference season was, apart from its most obvious purpose, an annual opportunity for politicians to lobby journalists and vice versa. I have attended all the Labour and Conservative party conferences for fifteen years. News International hosted an annual party where the Prime Minister and the Cabinet would attend (or the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet). The individual newspapers would host dinners and I would always have many meetings arranged over the three or four days and attend the major speeches.

49. Meetings were almost always about policy issues, sometimes at the invitation of the politician, and sometimes at our request. When a politician and his or her advisors came into the newsroom for a lunch, it was generally to address the Editor and senior journalists on that politician's policies or to debate a contentious issue between that particular politician and the newspaper.

#### *Hospitality*

50. I have been asked to deal with the question of hospitality. Before the Bribery Act came into force, it was not uncommon to buy political contacts small gifts e.g. wine or flowers as a thank you or for congratulations. Most contact was over lunch or dinner at Wapping, but there was some at restaurants where the newspaper would usually pay the bill.
51. One example is when I spent a lot of time working with the Paedophile Unit at New Scotland Yard as a result of the Sarah's Law Campaign, and would sometimes send them a case of wine as a thank you for what they did on a daily basis and what they had to witness. People, whether politicians or senior police officers, were taken to good restaurants that were appropriate to their seniority. As far as I was concerned, it was always proportionate and helped to foster the contacts and relationships that we developed.

#### *Prime Ministers*

52. I have been asked to detail my professional relationship with each of the Prime Ministers.
53. I first met Tony Blair in 1995 after he became leader of the Labour party. As the schedule shows, I met him at numerous political and social occasions, and these meetings increased in frequency throughout his decade as Prime Minister. I've had many formal, informal and social meetings with him, some of which I have been able to detail. We also spoke often on the telephone on a variety of issues and I do not have a record of these calls or the number of them.
54. Tony Blair, his senior cabinet, advisers and press secretaries were a constant presence in my life for many years. It is true that some of these professional relationships resulted in social contact, but that is not surprising due to the thirteen years tenure. In the earlier years I became close friends with his wife Cherie Blair - who was a great advocate of women's equality - and also with the Blairs' closest advisers including Alastair Campbell and his partner Fiona Miller.



55. Although the inevitable tensions caused by my profession and our coverage were a constant source of disagreements, I remained in close contact with Tony Blair throughout his time in Downing Street. From 1996 to 2007 both the *News of the World* and *The Sun* backed Tony Blair and New Labour, although the newspaper was always a critical friend campaigning on behalf of our readers.
56. The Sun ran vigorous campaigns to persuade the Government to agree to a referendum on the EU Constitution and against the Euro. It would have been possible for Tony Blair to have taken offence over our treatment of him. Instead, he stood his ground and repeatedly told me that we would have to agree to disagree on Europe. Equally, the *News of the World* criticised Cherie Booth when she (and other instructed members of her chambers) defended the right of a paedophile to live near his victim. The *News of the World* also published stories concerning Peter Foster which were difficult and embarrassing for the Blairs. Issues would arise therefore from time to time which would test friendships but this is inevitable if people are doing their jobs properly. In my view, it would be completely inappropriate for any journalist to put a friendship with a politician before the interest of that journalist's readers.
57. In 2003, during the Iraq war, I spent more time than usual talking to Tony Blair and Downing Street. I believe this was due to our support of the Iraq invasion and the large military readership of *The Sun*.
58. I first met Gordon Brown in 1996 and then more frequently in the run up to the 1997 General Election. I was Deputy Editor of the *News of the World* and, like our sister paper *The Sun*, we were supporting Tony Blair and New Labour. Over the years I established a working relationship with Gordon Brown, Ed Balls and the Treasury. Gordon Brown would call every daily newspaper editor after each of his budgets (and on other occasions as well) to gauge opinion and have regular meetings with other Fleet Street journalists – I was no different.
59. I also established a close friendship with Gordon Brown's girlfriend, fiancée and then wife, Sarah. In fact it was during the announcement of their engagement in 1997 that I first advised Sarah on aspects of the media (*The News of the World* published, with their permission, the first photograph of them together).
60. We also worked on many charitable causes together including PiggyBankKids and the Jennifer Brown Research Fund, Woman's Aid and Domestic Violence and Maternal Mortality. Sarah devoted much of her time to her life as a campaigner and writer, often submitting authored pieces to our newspapers. I worked with Sarah to achieve publicity and public awareness for her campaigns and also wrote for her book 'Moving On Up'.
61. Our support of Tony Blair over the deepening hostility between him and Gordon Brown often made the relationship difficult. Although they were supposed to be on the same side, Gordon Brown viewed newspapers as 'his camp' or Blair's camp. My friendship with Sarah at least meant that for some

while we continued to have a cordial working relationship, but in 2006 the famous 'curry house coup' left my relationship with Gordon Brown and 'his camp' quite hostile. Tony Blair and his aides were convinced that Gordon Brown and his aides had conspired together in order to force his early resignation. Gordon Brown saw *The Sun's* support for Tony Blair at this time as a betrayal.

62. However by 2008, I had known Sarah well for over ten years. Our friendship had strengthened through many difficult situations and tragic personal circumstances, and we were good friends to each other despite the conflicts that arose from the criticism by *The Sun* of aspects of Gordon Brown's tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer or Prime Minister.
63. The year I turned 40, Sarah was concerned that I had not planned any birthday celebrations. That same year, both Elisabeth Murdoch and Wendi Murdoch also celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> birthdays and so Sarah invited all three of us with some mutual friends to have dinner at Chequers and, due to logistics, to stay over that night and leave after breakfast. That is the extent of the so-called "slumber/pyjama party". Gordon Brown was not present at the dinner but he may have been there the next morning before we all left.
64. In the end, the events of Autumn 2009, in particular *The Sun's* coverage of Afghanistan and support for David Cameron, made it difficult for Sarah and I to be as close as we had been. Indeed, since the election in 2010, I believe we have only seen each other once at a mutual friend's wedding party.
65. I first met David Cameron, I believe, after he had been appointed Shadow Education Secretary. Thereafter, after he became Leader of the Opposition in December 2005, I met him with increased frequency. Like most formal meetings, I would often have our political editor present. Just as with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, I met David Cameron at numerous political and social occasions (including working breakfasts, lunches, receptions, News Corporation summer parties, party conferences and dinners).
66. When he was Leader of the Opposition David Cameron and I spoke regularly on the telephone on a variety of issues, and I do not have a record of these calls or the number of them. Since Mr Cameron has become Prime Minister, however, I have not been to Downing Street. By then, I had become Chief Executive Officer of News International, and I had no reason to do so. I have had few formal meetings with David Cameron whilst he has been Prime Minister. When I have seen him, it has been mainly at social events, celebrations or other occasions.
67. Like other Prime Ministers, David Cameron's views and those of *The Sun* were often different and we had disagreements on policy.
68. I should add that my husband Charlie and David Cameron and his family have been friends for many years. I would say that, particularly since Charlie and I married in June 2009, David Cameron and I became friends, and he has been a personal guest of my husband and myself at social dinners (including on 19th December 2009 and on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2010), and we have been to Chequers

(where many other media personnel, public figures and personal friends have of course also been). I have also met him at the homes of other personal friends and family.

#### *The loan of the retired police horse*

69. I have been asked by the Inquiry to deal with the loan of a retired police horse by the Metropolitan Police Service. During a holiday with my husband, we had been told about these retired horses and that, due to their tough lives on the front line, it was often difficult to retire them properly as they need expensive veterinary care and experienced riders. Months later, at the end of a lunch with Sir Ian Blair, I asked about the plight of police horses and I was offered the chance to visit Imber Court – the HQ of the highly professional Mounted Branch. I was subsequently interviewed, and our farm assessed, and it was agreed by the Mounted Branch we should be loaned a retired police horse. I note that Lord Blair does not recall this conversation. There is no reason why he should. The main purpose of the lunch was to discuss the IPCC report into the Stockwell investigation.

#### Media influence on public policy and decision-making

70. I have been asked to deal with a number of specific issues.

#### *General Elections*

71. Rupert Murdoch did of course have strong views about the stance that his newspapers would take in a General Election and it is not possible that an editor of *The Sun* or the *News of the World* would support a party in an election without discussing it with him. He would always listen to opinions from his senior executives - one of his many strengths - and, if presented with the right argument, he would change his mind. But equally, and more importantly, the stance that a newspaper took was also influenced by its readership. Rupert Murdoch would always ask about the readers and what they thought and what was in their best interests.
72. Though *The Sun* had supported New Labour for many years, a number of issues - Gordon Brown's return to Old Labour and his woeful support for the war in Afghanistan, the size of the bank bailout, the reneging on the promise of a referendum on the European Constitution - meant that, by the spring of 2009, we realised that the paper had run out of things to say in support of Gordon Brown's Government.
73. On so many issues, we found we were attacking the Government and calling for an election to encourage Gordon Brown to go to the electorate and get his own mandate. It was fairly inevitable that we would end up supporting David Cameron, and we chose to show our support for him the day after Gordon Brown's Party Conference Speech in September 2009. Although, by then, I had become CEO of News International, I was instrumental in our change of stance along with Dominic Mohan, *The Sun* political team and of course Rupert and James Murdoch. As the Inquiry has heard, Rupert Murdoch was

of the view, which we shared, that *The Sun* should withdraw its support from the Government.

74. I have been asked about the effect of the editorial stance of a newspaper on the conduct and outcome of General Elections and other national polls. I do not think that newspapers fundamentally change the outcome of elections, particularly with the digital and multi-media choices available now. The significance of a newspaper's stance is for a different reason – it is an early indication of the outcome of an election since it reflects as far as it can the views of its readership. The stance that *The Sun* takes has always been regarded by politicians as important because the newspaper is not partisan – it is said that it has a large number of floating voters. When we concluded, therefore, that our readers had lost confidence in Gordon Brown's Government it was a significant moment, because it reflected the mood of our readership. I don't remember one politician not asking for support from *The Sun*.

#### *Campaigns*

75. I have also been asked to deal with how and why newspapers run campaigns. Newspaper campaigns are hugely important, and effective, in providing a vehicle for the concerns and wishes of readers. Without such campaigns, members of the public are often simply not heard. Campaigns formed an essential part of my newspaper career, and led to me engaging very closely with public figures in the type of private meeting to which I have already made reference. Plainly, none of them were concerned with the commercial or business interests of News International or News Corp.
76. We did, of course, gauge public feeling on particular issues by seeing how well the papers sold. There were failures, as well as successes. Sometimes, we simply failed to capture the interest of our readers; on other occasions, we delivered our message badly. I ran a campaign against racism towards immigrants, but some of our message backfired, and the readers didn't like the lecturing tone and politically correct nature of the campaign.
77. But other campaigns worked well. There were many campaigns by the *News of the World* and *The Sun*. Those with which I had the most involvement with are:
- a. Sarah's Law
  - b. Help For Heroes
  - c. Baby P
  - d. Madeline McCann
  - e. Malaria No More
  - f. Europe
  - g. Domestic Violence
  - h. Make Poverty History
  - i. Academy Schools



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- j. Comic Relief
  - k. MRSA
  - l. Victims of dangerous driving
  - m. Victims of knife crime
  - n. Postcode lottery for Breast cancer
  - o. NHS reform
  - p. Overcrowded prisons
  - q. Welfare reform
  - r. Fathers for Justice
  - s. Sun Employment
78. I deal in more detail with some of these campaigns below.
77. The most significant campaign that I ever ran was the Sarah's Law Campaign. I became personally involved because I felt a strong sense of injustice on behalf of Sarah Payne and her family. Although Roy Whiting was on the Sex Offenders Register, no members of the public had access to it and so he and other serious paedophiles were allowed to live unchecked in society, notwithstanding that the rate of recidivism in serious paedophiles is around 87%. Roy Whiting lived near Sarah Payne's grandparents and had a previous conviction for abducting and sexually assaulting an 8-year-old girl. I felt that we should do something about the fact that paedophiles were living unchecked in this way.
78. We began a campaign of naming and shaming paedophiles. I accept that this could have been done better with more time but I balanced that with a need to highlight this issue while the readers were aware of the story. Some people were included in the list that should not have been grouped with serious paedophiles. There were risks of vigilantism. Yet, I had looked at the success of Megan's Law in the United States, which was similar to the law that we were proposing, and in the case of Megan's Law there were almost no examples of vigilantism.
79. After a couple of weeks we stopped the naming and shaming and the government agreed to close all the loopholes in the law which allowed paedophiles to remain unchecked in the community. That happened, and in certain defined cases of someone who has regular, unsupervised access to children, it is now possible for parents to find out whether that individual has a record for child sex offences. In total 15 new pieces of legislation were introduced as a result of the campaign.
80. When I was Editor of *The Sun*, we always supported and campaigned on behalf of the Military and in particular the Armed Forces. I spent a lot of time with the Secretary of State for Defence and with the Chiefs of the Armed Services. I spent some time in Afghanistan and was pleased to see how our support for the troops helped morale. In October 2007 we launched a campaign for a charity called Help For Heroes. Soldiers who had suffered

wounds in theatre particularly from IEDs were suffering poor aftercare once their immediate medical needs had been dealt with. In particular, at that time the rehabilitation centre Hedley Court needed a huge injection of funds to cope with the injuries coming from Afghanistan. The campaign has been hugely successful. I think to date the charity has raised well over 100 million pounds. After a dinner with the Prince of Wales – he suggested that we also fund and organize an annual awards ceremony to praise all aspects of the military. This is now known as the Sun's Millies and is supported greatly by the Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, as well as politicians from all parties.

81. Our domestic violence campaign influenced the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill 2005. As a direct result of our work with Sandra Horley at Refuge and Women's Aid, with Gordon Ramsay and Sarah Brown and from receiving letters from women readers suffering from domestic violence, we campaigned regularly between 2003 and 2005 to tighten up the law on common assault and restraining orders. The Sun's campaign was praised by the police, the Home Secretary and relevant charities.
82. Finally, I should mention the campaign concerning the response of Haringey Council to the failings over the Baby P case. We ran a campaign demanding the resignation of those that we felt were most responsible: Sharon Shoesmith, the social workers and the doctor. Baby Peter sustained over 50 injuries during an eight-month period in which he was repeatedly seen by Haringey Childrens' Service and NHS professionals. The campaign had enormous traction with our readership and we were able to deliver a petition signed by 1.5 million people to Downing Street calling for their resignations. The decision of Social Services to allow a "step-father" who was on a charge of raping a two year old to continue living in Baby P's house was a cataclysmic failure and the reaction of our readership does demonstrate that we were right to call for personal responsibility to be taken by Ms. Shoesmith.
83. I have been asked about the risks associated with campaigns, and I have already referred to the risks of vigilantism in connection with the paedophile campaign. With the campaign concerning Haringey Council I am sure that we tapped into and reflected the public mood, but we were criticized for being tough and harsh and some will say that we should have acted with more restraint. The biggest risk is to launch a campaign that the newspaper's readers have no interest in, because this means you have misjudged them. Also I accept that there is an associated risk that campaigns can be seen, wrongly, as 'media witch hunts'.

#### *Public and political appointments*

84. I have been asked to what extent my views were sought or offered on cabinet appointments. I think the genesis for this question must be stories that have appeared in the past that a particular Shadow Minister had been replaced at my request. This is myth. I had no influence over the appointment of any minister, shadow or otherwise. I have never sought it, and it is preposterous to think that a Prime Minister or party leader would be dictated to by me. From time to time all newspapers, including those that I edited, might campaign for

political resignations but this is completely different. Politicians too would talk to me about our readers' perception of them, no doubt as part of a process of gathering information. But that was the limit of it.

85. With regard to appointments of other public figures, from time to time *The Sun* has argued that individuals should be sacked or resign or be suspended. I cannot say what influence these articles had on their futures; each case is different. What I do believe, though, is that in each instance we were reflecting the public mood after wrongdoing had been exposed.

*The Data Protection Act reform*

86. I have been asked about the extent to which I, or anyone on my behalf, made representations in relation to the development of policy concerning the Data Protection Act 1998. I believe the issue is whether or not the change in the law introducing custodial sentences for offences against Section 55 of the Act was to be brought into force.
87. I have only my recollection of this issue as I do not have any records. I know that Les Hinton, when he was Chief Executive Officer of News International, together with Murdoch MacLennan and Paul Dacre had been lobbying against the new provision from their industry roles. I took over Les Hinton's role when he went to the United States to become Chief Executive Officer of Dow Jones. My recollection is that the three of us met with Jack Straw and he seemed sympathetic to our views. Any notes concerning these meetings will be held now by News International, Associated Newspapers or Telegraph newspapers. This was an example of industry lobbying for a perfectly proper purpose.

*BSkyB*

88. I have been asked the extent, if any, to which I discussed with any member or representative of the Government the possibility of News International acquiring a larger stake in BSkyB in 2010-2011. I have been asked particularly about discussions that I might have had with either the Prime Minister in October or December 2010 or with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in December 2010.
89. I think that I should clear up a common misconception. The BSkyB bid was a bid by News Corp, not News International. I was not on the Board of News Corp and I had no formal role in it. I was not therefore directly involved in the strategy or discussions concerning the bid, although of course I was made aware of the general position and was at times emailed, or copied into emails, about it (as Exhibit RMB/2 shows). I certainly attended internal meetings about it.
90. There did come a point, however, when the perception was that it was News International that was bidding for BSkyB, and inevitably, as its Chief Executive, I found myself drawn into the debate. As might be expected, many people sought to raise the issue with me, and I became involved in defending the bid to them. I cannot now recall all the occasions when the bid was

91. At no point did I ever have an inappropriate conversation with anyone who had any influence over what the Government might do. The formation of the anti-Sky bid alliance was unprecedented - I think it involved the BBC, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail* - nearly all the media groups apart from News International. Other commercial rivals like British Telecom also joined the alliance. It was in this climate that conversations took place as many of these media companies were using their own publications or broadcasts to convey their opposition.
92. With regard to the suggestion that I had 'discussions' with David Cameron and George Osborne, I am sure I did refer to the issue generally but it would have been in the context of the anti-Sky bid alliance and not specifically on detailed matters concerning the bid. I am reminded by Exhibit KRM/18, and the emails on page PROP100001679, that I emailed Frederic Michel, in response to an email from him on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010, stating "*Same from GO - total bafflement at response*". This seems to refer to the Ofcom 'issues letter' that had been sent out a few days before.
93. I cannot recall sending this email, but I presume that 'GO' was a reference to George Osborne, whom, according to the records that I have, I had seen socially the previous evening. The email clearly shows that whatever was discussed was brief and inconsequential. The issue was topical, and of course everyone would have known that, as the CEO of News International, I would have been likely to support the bid.

94. I have been asked about Mr Rupert Murdoch's interest in UK education centres, with particular reference to a visit to East London to inspect a site where Mr Murdoch was said to have offered to build an Academy School.

95. News International had a significant community social responsibility remit. Rupert Murdoch wanted to give something back to the poorest areas of the East End where News International was based. The idea was to establish a school for 3-18 year olds, which would also be a centre for media excellence. I had many meetings with both Michael Gove and Boris Johnson concerning the project and spent a lot of time visiting children's schools and meeting pupils in connection with the project. I hope that one day the project will become a reality, but obviously since July last year I have had no further part to play in it.



Andy Coulson

96. I have been asked to set out full details of all advice sought or offered by me in relation to the appointment of Andy Coulson with particular reference to a story that I dissuaded David Cameron from appointing Guto Harri to the post.
97. This is another myth. The first I heard of the possibility of Andy Coulson being appointed to the role was from Andy Coulson himself. By this time Mr Coulson had left News International. Mr Coulson told me the idea had come from George Osborne. At no point in the process did either David Cameron or George Osborne seek my views about his suitability before his appointment.
98. As for Guto Harri, I had no idea that he was a contender for the job. I know Guto and have the highest regard for him. If I had been asked for my view about Guto Harri, I would have only said positive things about him.
99. Finally, this particular allegation, one of many that had been made about me, does give rise to a wider point. It is one thing to be a passionate advocate of a free press, but if you seek to defend an inaccurate free press, you lose the moral high ground. I think that if the press do get it wrong, then there is a responsibility on them to correct their inaccuracies, otherwise these myths and false stories continue to be published unchecked and then to circulate to a wider audience through the Internet. Correcting inaccuracies does not cost a great deal for the press, yet it is given a low priority and minimal projection. I recognise that the newspapers that I edited are as much at fault as any other in this respect.
100. On the issue of fault, I would like to return to this Inquiry when I can speak more freely. It would be disingenuous of me to not confront the failings of the press while defending the right of a free press. Through my experience as a working journalist for 22 years, and as a CEO of a media group handling a corporate crisis I believe that I am in a unique position to comment on future regulation, ethics and practices of the press. In the last nine months of my life I have had little proper opportunity for a full right of reply. Due to my current situation it is still impossible for me to reply in detail.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

Dated

*Andrew Coulson*  
2012